



Community Relations Commission ~ Minutes ~

Thursday, November 14, 2019

City Hall, Second Floor
Rockford, IL 61104

<http://www.rockfordil.gov/>

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Todd Burton called the meeting to order at 5:37 p.m.

A. Roll Call

Commissioner Name	Status
Eric Brown	Present
Todd Burton	Present
Jurea Crudup	Present
Victoria De La Rosa	Present
Erin Hannigan	Present
Nikki Lynch	Present
William Martin	Absent
Anqunette Parham	Present
Ricardo Montoya Picazo	Absent
Charles Prorok	Absent
Jay Ware	Present

B. Acceptance of Proceedings for the Community Relations Commission meeting held on October 10, 2019.

Commissioner Hannigan made a Motion to Amend the Journal of Proceedings to include in the Commissioners Report information regarding the availability of lactation rooms at the Winnebago County Courthouse. Commissioner De La Rosa SECONDED the MOTION. CARRIED 8-0.

Chair Burton made a Motion to Amend the Journal of Proceedings to change "Chairman" references to "Chair." Commissioner Brown SECONDED the MOTION. CARRIED 8-0.

II. PUBLIC SPEAKERS

1. Commissioner Ware spoke on behalf of the NAACP. He stated that the NAACP has been in existence since 1909 and has been working with NAMI and Eliminate Racism 815.
2. Commissioner DeLaRosa spoke on behalf of the Coalition of Latino Leaders.

III. INFORMATION ONLY

A. Departmental Overview: Human Resources

Shurice Hunter, Director of the Human Resources Department provided a presentation describing the work of the department. Information provided included:

- The Human Resources Department consists of four employees in addition to the Director, and the average number of full time City employees is 1,020.



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Operations Overview of the Human Resources Department is as follows:

- Recruiting and Onboarding
- Benefits Administration
- Employee Assistance Plan
- Workers' Compensation
- Family & Medical Leave
- Compensation
- Wellness Center
- Wellness Program
- Pensions
- Compliance
- Employee Relations
- Labor Relations

Director Hunter provided an overview of the demographics of the City of Rockford and then described the various recruiting efforts the department undertakes to reach a diverse population, including:

- Online Advertising
- Emails
- Targeted Display Advertising
- Media and Flyer Advertisements
- Community Outreach

Commissioner Brown asked about outreach to the disabled community. Director Hunter stated that the department has just started to reach out to that community and is attempting to make the City of Rockford's website more inclusive for job seekers.

Director Hunter provided the Equal Opportunity message contained on the City's job postings, which provides that applicants will be afforded equal employment opportunity without discrimination because of race, color, religion, sex, marital status, national origin or ancestry, citizenship status, age, physical or mental disability unrelated to ability, sexual orientation, military status, order of protection status or unfavorable discharge from military service. Applications also explain that applicants who require reasonable accommodation in the application and/or interview process should notify the City of Rockford Human Resources and will be given the same consideration as other candidates.

Director Hunter also highlighted portions of the City's Personnel Rules and Regulations that relate to City policies prohibiting discrimination, harassment, and sexual harassment.



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B. Departmental Overview: Community and Economic Development

Karl Franzen, Director of the Community and Economic Development Department provided a presentation describing the work of the department.

Director Franzen explained the organizational structure of his department, which has four (4) divisions:

- Economic Development
- Construction Services
- Land Use/Zoning and Planning
- Neighborhood Development

Mr. Franzen stated then we have Tradition Economic Development, where we have a pipeline of retention, expansion, businesses that we know have an opportunity to invest, we want to make sure that if they are in Rockford they are making that investment here.

Director Franzen explained some of the key activities of each division, which included the following information:

For the *Economic Development* division, one of the bigger priorities has been to make sure processes and outreach are promoting Rockford as a business-friendly city where businesses want to invest in development, retention, and expansion. The division has sought to engage businesses and implement processes that promote development and re-development opportunities.

- The division operates the BUSINESSFirst program, which is an introductory, one-stop shop for opening a business within the City of Rockford. Thus far in 2019, program has held 56 appointments with new businesses, 84% of which have been minority- or women-owned.
- Director Franzen also provided an overview of the Community Development Block Grant Forgivable Loan program. Since the beginning of 2017, 70% of recipients and 67% of funds have gone to minority- or women-owned businesses.
- The division also works on redevelopment of brownfields and has undertaken 28 projects totaling \$68 million in 2019.

The *Construction Services* division handles building permits and inspections. Highlights include:

- Handling \$110 million in commercial construction value YTD
- New single family home construction has gone up in the city

The *Neighborhood Development* division administers HOME Investment Partnership grant funds for homeowners. From 2017 to 2019, the division has managed funds for 76 HOME-funded homebuyer or rehab projects. In addition, the division has recently hired a neighborhood specialist who works to engage residents of the city, including through many of the 40 active neighborhood associations.



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C. Cannabis Update

Nicholas Meyer, Director of the Legal Department, provided an update on Illinois Cannabis legislations. He stated that state legislators are in the Fall Session, and as of this past week, the city's lobbyist has given him a full page of potential changes that may be made to the cannabis legislation. Director Meyer estimated by the spring, there should be a clearer picture of what the cannabis legislation will be.

Director Meyer stated that as of January 1, 2020, recreational cannabis will be legal in the state of Illinois. That Bill was passed in May. However, he advised that it will still be unlawful to walk around the city and smoke it, and will be illegal to smoke it in your apartment, depending on who your landlord is. Individuals will not be able to drive and consume it.

Director Meyer explained that there will be five types of licenses: dispensary license, small grow license, large grow license, infusing license, and a license for transportation. Currently there are 2 medical dispensaries in Rockford. As of January 1st, they can start selling recreational cannabis.

Director Meyer also explained that part of the program is mandatory expungement for certain cannabis related convictions.

IV. COMMISSIONERS REPORT

Commissioner Crudup stated that in January she will have her first corporate apprenticeship program in Culinary Arts. Individuals in the program will be leaving from here and going to the College in DuPage once a week with the apprenticeship program.

Commissioner DeLaRosa stated that the Mexican Consulate is in town until November 17th at Broadway Covenant. The League of Women Voters is sponsoring a benefit for asylum seekers on December 6th from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at Lutheran Church of the Good Shephard. The speaker, Linda Zuba, is a local activist has visited here before a number of times. USCIS is proposing a fee increase for naturalization. It was published today in the Federal Registrar. The current fee is \$725, and that is going to go up to \$1,170.00. They are also looking to eliminate the fee waiver for low income people looking to apply for citizenship, they are in the public comments period and Commissioner DeLaRosa encouraged everyone to go to the Registrar and leave a comment hopefully against this fee. DACA is currently in the Supreme Court, we expect a ruling on that sometime soon. Commissioner DeLaRosa also stated that the festival for Day of the Dead was very well attended and they had a lot of success and raise quite a bit of money to donate to children in foster care.

Commissioner Hannigan stated lawyers have been donating money to buy hams for local food pantries. Anyone is welcome to donate to provide food for the pantries for the holidays.



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Commissioner Ware reported that there was a Jobs in Trades event held on November 5th at the Turner Building, District 2 Police Station. Commissioner Ware also reported that he has a follow-up meeting with someone from the pipefitters union to talk about the cultural of problem kids not considering these higher paying jobs in trade when local businesses need skilled people to fill these positions.

Commissioner Brown spoke about our community's work in addressing domestic violence and human trafficking, which are issues that disproportionately impact the disability community. Commissioner Brown highlighted the 17th District Court Family Violence Coordinating Council monthly live viewing of a webinar and discussion. The next webinar is on December 10th from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at District One and it will be focusing on what to do if you are a parent who has a disability and is a survivor of Domestic Violence. Commissioner Brown also highlighted what RMTD is doing to eliminate barriers for people with disabilities in our community. With help from disability advocates, they have made large print documents for their route books so people with low vision can now read the maps.

Commissioner Parham stated that on December 7th Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority will be hosting a scholarship luncheon entitled Gifted Black and Rising II. It will take place at Giovanni's Restaurant and tickets can be purchased from any of the members, including her, or online at the Eventbrite website. Proceeds will benefit the chapter's community scholarship endowment and other local community service programs.

Commissioner Lynch stated the RAMM Scholarship is accepting applications. This scholarship is for local minority high school students and it is due December 7th.

Chair Burton stated that this Saturday evening he would be attending the Muslim Association of Greater Rockford Counting our Blessings Dinner. This past Monday was Veteran's Day and he thanked the community of Rockford and Winnebago County for the outpouring of support and assistance for veterans in this community. Chair Burton stated that there is a Veteran's Assistance Commission here in Winnebago County and asked those in attendance if they know of veterans who need assistance, point them to the commission.

Commissioner Crudup made a MOTION to ADJOURN. Commissioner Lynch SECONDED the MOTION. CARRIED 8-0

The meeting was ADJOURNED at 7:28 p.m.